



**2018**  
**REPORT TO THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS**



**IN TEXAS, THE PROMISE OF THE FUTURE KNOWS NO BOUNDS.**  
**GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT**



**“No force of nature is more powerful than **Texans helping Texans.**”**

In the moments of heroism and selflessness witnessed again and again since the storm first made landfall, Hurricane Harvey more than met its match.”

Governor Abbott’s remarks after Hurricane Harvey hit the Texas Coastal Bend region, August 2017

**Cover:** Students, teachers and parents from around the state attended a rally for the **Texas Charter School Association** in April 2017 on the south steps of the Texas Capitol, where Governor Abbott celebrated their commitment to educational achievement.

**Above:** While visiting the **Coastal Bend region** after Hurricane Harvey in August 2017, a survivor presented Governor Abbott with an American flag rescued from the storm, asking that he return it to the mayor of Rockport to once again fly over city hall.

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## **Reaffirming the character of Texas**

**It has been a year of triumphs and challenges — and challenges overcome, thanks to the amazing resilience and strength of character of our Texas family.**

**T**hough tested in 2017 by Hurricane Harvey and other tragedies, Texas remains the envy of the nation. In November, we set a new record for the lowest unemployment rate recorded in Texas in four decades, and December marked 92 consecutive months of annual job growth. Today, Texas is the top exporting state, the top tech exporting state and one of the top states for startups. We are No. 1 for population growth, and the Dallas, Houston, Austin and San Antonio metros together added more people last year than any state, except Texas as a whole. And thanks to our young, growing and highly skilled workforce of 13.5 million Texans, if Texas were a nation, our booming economy would be the 10th largest among the nations of the world.

But Texas is about more than just numbers. Families grow here. Innovation grows here. And opportunity grows here. That is why I have focused on making the Lone Star State freer, stronger, safer and smarter, and why I continue to work with my partners in the Texas Legislature to build a brighter path to opportunity for all Texans.

As always, and especially in a year when so many Texans were challenged by loss, I'm proud to have by my side the fabulous First Lady of Texas. From Cecilia's deep faith and steady grace, I have drawn strength over our 36 years of marriage. And I am so proud of all she has accomplished — as the First Lady of Texas and as "comforter-in-chief."

**I invite you to look back at the year's successes in the pages ahead. Texas is exceptional because of you. May God bless you all in the new year, and may He forever bless the great State of Texas.**

A decade of  
**JOB growth**

**TEXAS IS #1**

with **2.18 million jobs**  
added in the last **10 years**

Source: BLS, non-farm seasonally adjusted, as of December 2017

Texas population  
**GREW by more than**

**5.5** MILLION

since 2005, leading the  
nation for **12 straight years**

Source: US Census, most current data, July 2005-July 2017

Top CEOs in nation name Texas  
**BEST STATE** for Business

**13** YEARS  
& running

Source: Chief Executive magazine annual survey, 2017

Unemployment in Texas  
**BELOW** national average

at **3.9%**  
at **92 consecutive months**  
of annual job growth

Source: BLS, Texas, as of December 2017

Texas on-time high school  
**GRADUATION** rate

**89.1%**

all-time high, **TOP 5 in the nation**

Source: NCES, most recent school year 2015-2016

**SMALL BUSINESSES**  
& self-employed entrepreneurs

**ADD**  
more than  
**\$1** TRILLION  
to the state's economy

Source: Small Business Study, Office of Governor, April 2016

## Economic opportunity: Building an even brighter path

**Texas is the Lone Star State for a reason:  
We stand apart as a model for the nation.**

**B**uilding on the successes of our first legislative session in 2015, where we improved early education and higher education, provided a record amount of much-needed funding to build more roads, delivered the most robust border security effort of any state ever, and cut taxes and eliminated unnecessary license fees to secure Texans' freedom to aspire, we are now building an even brighter path to economic opportunity for all Texans following the 2017 legislative session and special session.

### Record Job Creation

Texas has long led the nation in industries like oil and gas, and despite the downturn in oil prices in 2015 and 2016, the diverse and resilient Texas economy has come roaring back.

This past year, Texas added 306,900 jobs, with record-level job creation numbers during the fourth quarter and with 10 of 11 industries expanding over the year. As a result, our unemployment rate remains



In 2017, Governor Abbott accepted *Site Selection's* annual **Governor's Cup** awarded to the top-performing state for capital investment and job creation in 2016, the fifth year in a row Texas has won the award.

below the national average — even as our population continues its record growth.

Attracted by this young, growing and job-ready workforce, and our business-friendly climate with no corporate income tax and no personal income tax, our easy access to global markets, our robust infrastructure and our predictable regulations, businesses **#GoBigInTexas**.

The **Texas Enterprise Fund** (TEF), administered within my Economic Development and Tourism Division, has been part of that job-creation success story, providing financial resources to help strengthen the state's economy. In the past two years alone, the Enterprise Fund helped to close the deal on 21 projects, attracting over \$655 million in new capital investments, and leading to the creation of 14,198 new direct jobs and — as a jobs multiplier — thousands more indirect jobs at existing local and small businesses all across the state, from Amarillo to the Rio Grande Valley. The \$57 million invested in job creation over the last two years also helped close the deal on five corporate headquarter relocations to Texas, with several from California.

With the TEF program fully funded for 2018–2019, we will continue to further diversify the booming Texas economy and attract and grow even more new jobs in communities across the Lone Star State.

### 2017 TEF Projected Return on Investment:

- **Austin:** A capital investment of more than \$20 million by Merck and 600 new direct jobs;
- **Burleson:** A capital investment of more than \$19 million by Golden State Foods Corporation and 150 new direct jobs;
- **Dallas:** A capital investment of more than \$3.4 million by Lone Wolf Real Estate Technologies and 150 new direct jobs;
- **Fort Worth:** A capital investment of more than \$5.2 million by Ryder Integrated Logistics Inc. and 200 new direct jobs;

■ **Greenville:** A capital investment of \$95 million by Brakebush Brothers Inc. and 800 new direct jobs;

■ **Irving:** A capital investment of more than \$8 million by Cognizant and 1,090 new direct jobs;

■ **Irving:** A capital investment of \$12.4 million by Gartner Inc. and 800 new direct jobs;

■ **Irving:** A capital investment of \$1.5 million by Pei Wei in their new global headquarters and 100 or more new direct jobs;

■ **Plano:** A capital investment of more than \$28 million by NTT DATA Services in their new North American headquarters and 6,377 new direct jobs;

■ **Rosenberg:** A capital investment of more than \$6 million by Hudson Products Holdings Inc. and 150 new direct jobs;

■ **San Antonio:** A capital investment of up to \$10.5 million by Ernst & Young LLP and 600 new direct jobs;

■ **San Antonio:** A capital investment of \$13.6 million by Hulu LLC and 214 new direct jobs; and

■ **San Patricio County:** An initial capital investment of more than \$9 billion by ExxonMobil Chemical Company and SABIC US Projects LLC and over 600 new direct jobs.

## Permissionless Innovation

Texas is home to innovation because the Lone Star State offers entrepreneurs the freedom to grow. But economic freedom does not begin and end at any



In September, Governor Abbott joined the ground-breaking celebration in **Westlake** for a new 70-acre Charles Schwab campus attracted by a 2016 TEF grant and creating 700 new Texas jobs.

city limits sign. The liberty to experiment with new business models should be permitted by default.

Across industries, we need to remove barriers to entry, encourage competition, enact consistent consumer safety regulations and then empower consumers to choose. That is why I was proud to sign legislation **ending the patchwork of local regulations** on ride-sharing companies to encourage free enterprise and job creation, and expand transportation options.

We also continued **repealing unnecessary state occupational licensing** requirements, expanding fee **exemptions for military veterans opening businesses**, and removing barriers in licensing programs that inhibit job creation and free enterprise.

In March, Governor Abbott congratulated Charter Communications CEO Tom Rutledge on Charter's first bilingual call center — a \$17 million investment in McAllen creating more than 600 Texas jobs.

(Graphic: Charter)

## IMPROVING SERVICE WHILE GROWING JOBS IN AMERICA

Charter is **opening a bilingual call center** in McAllen, Texas, where we'll be hiring for

more than  
**600**  
jobs



Our McAllen call center will provide superior customer support to our Spanish-speaking customers, who had been served previously by call centers outside the U.S.

## Balanced Budget

**T**exans know how to live within their means; no less should be expected from their government. The **fiscally responsible 2018–2019 State Budget** that I signed into law addresses the most pressing challenges faced by our state.

Even in a tight budget climate, this \$216.6 billion budget prioritizes the safety and well-being of all Texans. This budget funds a life-saving overhaul of Child Protective Services, ensuring children in our foster care system receive the protection they deserve. It also continues to fund our state's role in securing the border. It funds the state's disaster response fund to provide state resources when disaster strikes again. And it better protects law enforcement officers across the state, funding grants for rifle-resistant vests.

The 2018–2019 budget also ensures that the workforce of today and our job creators of tomorrow have the resources needed to keep the Texas economy growing and thriving. All eligible prekindergarten students will receive a high-quality education by increasing standards statewide. And the state will remain competitive on the job creation front with funds to help Texas remain the best state in the nation for doing business.

This budget achieves all of these goals while **restraining state-controlled spending** below the growth in population and inflation. Finally, to further restrain the growth of state government and reduce the expenditure of taxpayer funds, I vetoed approximately \$120 million in proposed spending, after previously directing state agencies to impose a hiring freeze through August 2017, saving an estimated \$200 million.

## Job-Ready Workforce

Our job-ready workforce, the second-largest in the nation at 13.5 million strong, is key to job growth today. To ensure ongoing job growth tomorrow, I will continue to implement policies further **elevating our**

**education system** and increasing workforce participation by anticipating and meeting employers' needs in high-demand fields. Within the Office of the Governor, my **Texas Workforce Investment Council** assists with strategic planning for the Texas workforce development system. The 19 members represent business, organized labor, education, community-based organizations and state agencies.

A 2017 evaluation of the system, which includes 28 local workforce development boards, shows more than **4.5 million Texans accessed workforce development and related services** delivered through 23 programs and eight state agencies this past year. More than 1,500 Texas students with disabilities also participated in skills training through paid work experience during the first **Summer Earn and Learn** program conducted by the Texas Workforce Commission and local workforce development boards.

My office also awarded over \$5 million in **competitive grants to foster innovation in workforce programs** for underserved and special needs populations. And our state's workforce and higher education partners continue collaboration to ensure any underprepared Texans can access the programs needed to prepare them for a high school diploma, additional training and education, and employment.

The **Texas Internship Challenge**, launched by the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, is promoting employer engagement and providing a web-based portal to connect students and internship opportunities. Two key workforce tools, **Texas Reality Check** and **Texas Career Check**, were launched to help students explore careers and educational programs. And in the future, Texas students will more seamlessly transition from high school to postsecondary education through the work of our state's education agencies to **align programs of study and career clusters**. The Texas Workforce Commission is also expanding partnerships with independent school districts, educational service

**The 2018–2019 budget also ensures that the workforce of today and our job creators of tomorrow have the resources needed to keep the Texas economy growing and thriving.**

centers, community and technical colleges, and employers to increase **integrated work-based learning opportunities** such as apprenticeships, internships and on-the-job training.

And I'm proud of our state's support for our veterans, including new programs like **Texas Operation Welcome Home**, providing \$4 million in grant funding for transition skills training in high-growth fields, and **Military Family Support**, providing \$1 million for employment assistance for military spouses.

### Equal Access to Opportunity

To ensure Texans with disabilities have equal access to opportunity, the [Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities](#) makes recommendations on disability issues, advocates for compliance with disability-related laws and promotes the work of local committees. The committee annually [recognizes employers](#) for hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, and media professionals and students for positively depicting Texans with disabilities. Of the 12 committee members, seven are people with disabilities; six state agencies also serve. Members and staff also provide technical assistance and referrals related to access, communications, education, emergency management, health, housing, recreation, transportation, veteran affairs and workforce opportunities. Their outreach was critical during Hurricane Harvey rescue and recovery efforts.



In April, Governor Abbott hosted CEOs from industry-leading businesses located in Texas and listed on the **NYSE** and **NASDAQ** exchanges. The Lone Star State is home to 50 Fortune 500 headquarters.



Small business owner Tiffany Tremont of the Silotech Group from **San Antonio** was a guest of Governor Abbott at his 2017 State of the State address, highlighting the contribution of women and veteran entrepreneurs to the booming Texas economy.

### Economic Development: Small Businesses

Small businesses are big in Texas, representing 9 in 10 of all businesses in the Lone Star State, employing nearly half of all Texans in the workforce and, along with self-employed entrepreneurs, adding more than \$1 trillion to the state's economy.

In addition to serving as the principal advocate for Texas small business owners, the [Office of Small Business Assistance](#) within the Office of the Governor hosts forums and workshops across the state throughout the year. Host communities in 2017 included: **Bryan-College Station, Converse, Coppell, Early, El Paso, Fairfield, Hebbronville, Houston, Laredo, Pharr, Texarkana** and **Tomball**.

### Economic Development: Women in Business

Women who invest in themselves and inspire change in others represent the greatest potential for job growth in Texas, and I am committed to making Texas the most welcoming home for them.

Women-owned businesses in Texas have grown at a rate three times the national average for all firms over the last 20 years. Women-owned businesses in **San Antonio** and **Austin** lead the nation for growth in jobs they have created since 2002. And women-owned businesses in Texas generated \$134 billion in revenue last year, adding to the state's economy.

My goal is to be No. 1 in the nation for women-owned businesses. To help more Texas women access the resources needed to invest in themselves and grow jobs, my Governor's Commission for Women hosted the second **Governor's Business Forum for Women in Houston**, welcoming over 500 attendees.

Members of the [Governor's Commission for Women](#) also participated in a number of events and speaking engagements throughout the year, promoting women business owners, STEM education, volunteerism, women and children's health, and women veterans and service members.



Texas First Puppy Pancake, serving as the official Governor's Mansion greeter, joins Governor Abbott and Toyota Motor Corporation President Akio Toyoda in September. Toyota Motor Corporation's recently opened North American headquarters in **Plano** is home to more than 4,000 Texas jobs.

### **Economic Development: Travel and Tourism**

The multi-billion dollar travel industry is a vital part of the state and local economies. With \$69.1 billion in total direct travel spending in the Lone Star State, the travel industry creates 664,000 direct jobs and as many as 500,000 indirect jobs in communities across Texas. In fact, travel and tourism activity currently accounts for roughly 1 in 10 Texas jobs across multiple industry sectors and in every region of the state.

The largest metropolitan areas in Texas and their surrounding communities are home to tens of thousands of jobs directly reliant on traveler

spending: 65,000 jobs in **Austin**; 78,000 jobs in **Fort Worth** and in **San Antonio**; 118,000 jobs in **Dallas**; and 141,000 jobs in **Houston**. Travel is also an economic driver for smaller metropolitan areas like **Amarillo, Beaumont, El Paso, McAllen** and more, all with between 8,000 to 17,000 direct travel industry jobs. Communities with up to 7,000 direct travel jobs stretch from **Laredo** to **Longview** and many towns in between. And finally, rural communities across the state add 49,000 more direct travel jobs.

The investment in **Travel Texas** advertising this year by [Economic Development and Tourism](#) in the Office of the Governor influenced \$4.6 billion in travel spending from outside Texas to our state, generating \$282 million in state taxes and supporting 45,600 travel industry jobs in Texas. These results represent an 8-to-1 return in state tax revenue. Public relations activities also generated \$65 million of earned media coverage, reaching 14.6 billion in circulation.

Finally, Travel Texas partnered with other state agencies to assist Texas communities, both large and small, with tourism development initiatives. Rural areas that recently participated in the **Community Tourism Assessment** program include **Shamrock, Jasper, Blanco** and **Childress**.



Governor Abbott joined U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry in April southwest of **Houston** at the valve-opening ceremony for Petra Nova, the world's largest post-combustion carbon-capture facility installed on an existing coal-fueled power plant. This technology has the potential to enhance long-term sustainability of coal-fueled power plants around the world.

### Economic Development: Music Industry

The music industry in Texas, including music businesses and music education, created almost 95,000 direct permanent jobs with \$3.6 billion in annual earnings, and generated over \$8.5 billion in annual economic activity this past year, up 15 percent over 2015. The ripple effects associated with the direct injection related to music businesses and music education bring the total impact, including the direct effects, to over 178,000 permanent jobs, \$6.5 billion in earnings and \$19.8 billion in annual economic activity. The state also realized approximately \$323 million in tax revenue from these impacts.

The [Texas Music Office](#) within the Office of the Governor launched the **Music Friendly Communities Program** this past year to foster best practices among music communities, to create a more interconnected music industry and to grow jobs in Texas. And in addition to managing a business referral network, the Music Office also awarded more than \$33,000 to Texas music education and community nonprofits through its specialty license plate grants.

### Economic Development: Moving Images

The [Texas Film Commission](#) in the Office of the Governor promotes Texas as the premier destination for film, television, commercial, animation, visual effects and video game production. In 2017, the **Texas Moving Image Industry Incentive Program** created 19,400 local jobs and generated

approximately \$192 million of in-state spending through 55 projects. To qualify for grant funds on eligible expenses, 70 percent of paid cast, crew and extras must be Texas residents and 60 percent of total production days must be completed in Texas.



With the support of the Texas Film Commission, National Geographic filmed “The Long Road Home” at Fort Hood in **Killeen**, and in **Harker Heights, Copperas Cove, Fort Worth and Austin**. The series, chronicling real events of the U.S. Army’s 1st Cavalry Division on “Black Sunday” (April 4, 2004), constructed the largest working set in North America during production and created more than 500 local cast and crew jobs as well as nearly 4,450 background cast bookings. Of those bookings, approximately 1,250 were veterans or active military personnel. The production also booked more than 12,000 nights in Texas hotels, spending an estimated \$950,000 in the Killeen area over the course of three months. (Photo above: Van Redin, Nat Geo)

Through the [Texas Music Office License Plate Grant Program](#), \$22 of the \$30 purchase fee goes directly toward providing **music instruments and lessons to Texas school children in need** around the Lone Star State.



The Texas Film Commission also listed 112 projects on its job hotline, for another 475 new local jobs in 2017. And while major metro areas continue to see steady production activity, our **Film Friendly Communities** across Texas, certified by the commission, have also hosted a wide range of other 2017 productions in communities across the state such as **Alpine, Elgin, Gonzales, Odessa, Round Rock, San Marcos, Smithville, Taylor** and **Waco**.

Finally, Texas ranks in the top three in the nation for video game jobs. And with a **Media Production Development Zone Act** designation by the Texas Film Commission, video game company Certain Affinity expanded their production facility, which is estimated to generate \$101.2 million total economic impact by 2020, including \$3.7 million in state tax revenue.

Right: Among the many job creators Governor Abbott visited with were members of the **Texas Farm Bureau**, like cattle, hay and small grain producers Cade and Jessica Richmond and their children Sterling, Jackson and Lillie of DeLeon, as well as the **Greater Houston Partnership** and the **Greater Dallas Asian American Chamber of Commerce**.



### In the News: Businesses #GoBigInTexas

**Austin**, March 13: Governor Abbott hosts top tech job creators at the [SXSW Tech Meetup](#).

**Austin**, March 30: Governor Abbott welcomes 800 new Texas jobs attracted by a TEF grant at [Charles Schwab](#) opening.

**San Antonio**, March 31: Governor Abbott helps break ground for TxDOT's [US 281 expansion](#) project to help speed commerce and grow jobs.

**Plano**, April 5: Governor Abbott welcomes [Boeing's Global Services](#) headquarters, adding to the company's 4,000 Texas jobs.

**Irving**, April 6: Governor Abbott celebrates nearly 1,000 Texas jobs attracted by a TEF grant at the [McKesson Corporation](#) campus grand opening.

**Grapevine**, April 7: Governor Abbott attends the ribbon cutting for [Kubota Tractor Corporation's](#) North American headquarters relocating from California and adding 340 new Texas jobs attracted by a TEF grant.

**Plano**, July 6: Governor Abbott joins [Toyota's](#) North American headquarters grand opening and welcomes 4,000 new Texas jobs attracted by a TEF grant.

**Mesquite**, Oct. 17: Governor Abbott helps break ground for [Ashley Furniture Industries'](#) new regional distribution and fulfillment center, adding more than 350 new Texas jobs.

**Plano**, Nov. 29: Governor Abbott welcomes 5,000 new Texas jobs at the ribbon cutting for [Liberty Mutual's](#) new campus.



Students  
learning in  
our classrooms  
today are the  
**job creators**  
of tomorrow.



## Educational advancement: Opening the door to opportunity

**S**tudents learning in our classrooms today are the job creators of tomorrow: Texas public schools educate more than 1 in 10 of all elementary and secondary students in the nation, and more than 1 in 13 of all college students. The investment we make in our education system in Texas opens the door to opportunity for our students and sets the course for the future of America. That is why I introduced several new education programs first approved in the 2015 session and renewed in the 2017 legislative session and special session.

### Return on the Investment in Education:

- Because of our state's investment in educational advancement, we have **doubled the number of Tier One universities** in Texas, and our colleges and universities continue to be among the leaders in business, engineering, research and more.
- Our **high school graduation rate is at a record high** and in the **top five in the nation**. We are also second for the rate of African-American students graduating, fourth for Hispanic students and second for economically disadvantaged students.
- We have **more Blue Ribbon public schools** than any state, recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as exemplary high-performing elementary, middle and high schools that have an economically disadvantaged population of 25 percent or greater.
- We have three of the top 15 STEM schools, four of the top 10 magnet high schools, four of the top 20 public high schools, four of the top 25 public charter schools and **more public high schools ranked in the top 100 than any other state**.

**Previous page:** Governor Abbott visited with **Robertson Elementary** students in **Round Rock** in February; with students from around the state at the **Texas Charter School Association Rally** at the Capitol in April; and with **educators from across Texas** at the Governor's Mansion in April, where he proclaimed May 8–12 as **Teacher Appreciation Week**.

■ **More of our students are taking Advanced Placement exams**, with 45.1 percent of students from low-income households achieving a score of 3 or better; this is a **higher rate than the national average** of 24.9 percent and higher than any state.

■ Teacher **Jennifer Fuller, Arlington Independent School District**, and master teacher **Katie Negen, Slaton ISD**, were recognized with national Milken Educator Awards, the “Oscars of Teaching,” in October. They join **Amber Simpson, Somerset ISD**, recognized earlier in the year, for a total of 50 Texas teachers who have been presented with the award since the program began in 2000.

■ Ten Texas teachers have been named finalists for the 2017 **Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching**, the highest recognition a math or science teacher may receive for exemplary teaching in the United States.

To elevate our education system even more, we must continue to provide our great teachers — some of the best in America — with the tools they need to help our students, our state and our nation succeed.

### High-Quality Prekindergarten

The high-quality prekindergarten grant program provided enhanced instruction to 80 percent of prekindergarten-eligible 4-year-olds in Texas during the 2016–2017 school year. The program, offered in 55 percent of Texas school districts, required rigorous, enhanced standards related to curriculum, specific teacher qualifications, monitored academic performance and family engagement.

### Math Academies

Our new Math Academies provided instructional training in numeracy and technology to more than 9,300 kindergarten and first, second and third grade teachers across Texas.

## Reading Academies

Our new Reading Academies provided research-based professional development in reading and writing to over 7,500 kindergarten and first, second and third grade teachers.

## Reading-to-Learn Academies

By the end of this past summer, nearly 5,500 fourth and fifth grade teachers received professional development in effective instructional practices that promote student development of reading comprehension, and inferential and critical thinking.

## Digital Learning

Through my **Classroom Connectivity Initiative**, 92 percent of our school districts now meet the minimum connectivity goal, after securing \$25 million in state funding to leverage \$225 million in federal funding for the expansion of high-speed broadband.

In the 2017 legislative session, the Texas Legislature approved additional **digital learning grant funds** and expanded options for digital learning, including a repository for school districts to share **Open Education Resources**.

## Innovative Academies

To meet local workforce needs, 19 **Industry Cluster Innovative Academies** across Texas received grants for the 2017–2018 school year. These open-enrollment secondary schools offer career pathways in high-demand fields and focus on graduating students with industry certifications and 60 hours of college credit or an associate degree by the time they graduate from high school. A total of \$7.2 million in grant funding was made available through my **Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative** members: the Texas Education Agency, the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Fields of study at the academies include: advanced technologies and manufacturing; aerospace and defense; biotechnology and life sciences; energy; information and computer technology; and petroleum refining and chemical products.

## Education Funding

Following the special session, I was proud to sign legislation creating a **School Finance Commission** to continue the process of reforming the school finance system. School finance is not about financing our schools — it's about providing our kids with the best education possible. With a sense of urgency, we must create better ways to fund education. This bill also provided immediate funding for public education, historic funding for charter school facilities, new programs for students with special needs, benefits for retired teachers in Texas and hardship grants for districts.

## University Research Initiative

Ideas that begin in Texas at our leading universities will help transform the world. In March, I was pleased to host members of the first class of distinguished researchers recruited in 2015 and 2016 through my **Governor's University Research Initiative** (GURI) to join **Texas A&M University, The University of Texas at Austin** and the **University of Houston**. The nine researchers, hailing from across the nation and around the world, include members of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society in the United Kingdom. In November, I welcomed two more distinguished GURI researchers recruited in 2017.



■ **Dr. Roderic I. Pettigrew**, an internationally recognized leader in biomedical imaging and bioengineering, has joined Texas A&M University to lead Engineering Health, the first comprehensive educational program in the nation to fully integrate engineering into all health-related disciplines. He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Medicine.



■ **Dr. M. Cynthia Hipwell**, industry innovator and National Academy of Engineering member, has joined Texas A&M's Department of Mechanical Engineering as a Texas A&M Engineering Experiment Station Distinguished

Research Professor. Her areas of research include devices based on nanoscale phenomena and tools for innovation acceleration such as 3-D printing, machine learning and design virtualization.

One of my continuing top priorities that I first introduced in 2015, GURI is a matching grant program to assist eligible institutions in recruiting transformative researchers who will in turn serve as economic catalysts to the Texas economy for years to come. Funding was again renewed this past year. The grant program is administered within my Economic Development and Tourism Division.

### Degrees of Success

The strength of our economy is the Texas workforce; a skilled and educated workforce gives the Lone Star State a competitive advantage. For Texas to continue to grow our global economy, we need more of our students graduating with a two- or four-year degree.

The [Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's 60x30TX plan](#), which serves as the state's long-range

strategic plan for higher education, aims to accomplish that critical goal.

By 2030, according to the plan, 60 percent of Texans ages 25–34 will have earned a certificate or degree. All graduates from public higher education institutions will have completed programs with identified marketable skills. And undergraduate loan debt will not exceed 60 percent of first-year wages for graduates of Texas public institutions.

Currently, 41 percent of Texans age 25–34 hold a certificate or degree. The annual number of certificates and associate, bachelor's and master's degrees awarded has increased by 7.5 percent. And student loan debt as a percentage of first-year wage has not increased in the year since 60x30TX began.

In the 2017 legislative and special sessions, **need-based financial assistance** for Texas students enrolled at public universities was increased. Funding for **graduate medical education expansion grants** to create and sustain additional first-year residency positions in Texas was nearly doubled to help our state retain our medical school graduates rather than losing them to other states. And **community colleges can now offer bachelor's degree programs** in nursing, applied science and applied technology if approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, creating a new pathway for more students to earn a baccalaureate degree while keeping the cost low.

**“GURI is the kind of smart, strategic investment that will keep our great research universities at the forefront of innovation. Governor Abbott’s investment will pay off in a more educated workforce, a stronger economy and great universities.”** — John Sharp, Chancellor, The Texas A&M University System

**“Governor Abbott has made Texas a destination for researchers overnight. His bold commitment to GURI has allowed the University of Houston to be even more competitive in attracting the nation’s top research minds.”** — Renu Khator, Chancellor, University of Houston System

**“Every time we bring outstanding faculty members to Texas, whether it’s to UT, A&M, UH or any other institution, it advances our state’s reputation, advances our overall research portfolio and helps attract other star faculty as well.”** — Bill McRaven, Chancellor, The University of Texas System



To all who serve,  
protect and defend,  
we owe our **enduring**  
**gratitude.**



## Safety and security: Preserving Texans' freedoms

**P**rotecting all Texans from threats to our homeland, our state and our communities, and preserving our freedoms, is the priority of government. And the men and women who serve in uniform — our law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency responders and military members, and their families — deserve our enduring gratitude and respect.

### National Security Begins at the Border

Safety in our communities and security for our nation begin at our international border. That is why we took decisive action in my first two years in office, with the most robust border security effort of any state ever, to protect our citizens from threats posed by insecurity along our southern border and inaction by the Obama administration.

In January 2017, just days after the new administration took office in Washington, D.C., I spoke with then **U.S. Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly** to discuss the importance of strengthening border security and to thank President Donald Trump for his commitment to deploy additional resources. Days later, I then joined Secretary Kelly on a tour of the border. And in July, federal funding was approved for **Operation Secure Texas**, a previously state-funded operation launched in 2014 as a coordinated effort between the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), Texas National Guard and federal law enforcement to secure our border with Mexico.

**Previous page:** On July 7, First Lady Cecilia Abbott joined law enforcement in **remembering fallen officers** on the one-year anniversary of the Dallas shooting attack. On Sept. 11, Governor Abbott presented one of the **Star of Texas** awards to Houston Police Officer José Manuel Muñoz, who was injured in the line of duty, and his family. And on Dec. 11, the Governor presented a posthumous **Legislative Medal of Honor** to the great grandson of Army Master Sergeant Travis Earl Watkins.



At the **Texas Department of Public Safety Peace Officer Memorial Service** in May, Governor Abbott offered his heartfelt condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the line of duty and expressed his sincere gratitude for all peace officers serving the people of the Lone Star State.

The taxpayers of Texas have funded border security, a federal responsibility, for far too long. I am grateful that the federal government and congressional appropriators are stepping up and dedicating more resources to provide for the safety and security of all Texans and all Americans.

The **2018–2019 State Budget** maintains a biennial border security appropriation of \$800 million. This funds the hiring of 250 additional DPS troopers to serve in the border region, as well as the installation of additional security cameras to expand detection capabilities along our southern border. With the deployment of additional boots on the ground and effective technology, DPS will be able to expand its theater of operations within the border region and will be able to respond to emerging threats without drawing upon resources from elsewhere in the state.

As always, we are grateful for the men and women of the Texas National Guard, Texas Department of Public Safety and U.S. Customs and Border Protection for their continuing commitment to national security at the border. That was the message I shared in

December with the newly appointed **U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen**, who came to the Texas Capitol to discuss the ongoing recovery efforts following Hurricane Harvey as well as border security and cyber security.

### Safety Within Texas

**A**s Governor, my top priority is public safety and keeping dangerous criminals off our streets. It is inexcusable to release individuals from jail who have been charged with heinous crimes like sexual assault against minors, domestic violence and robbery. There are deadly consequences to not enforcing the law, and Texas is now a state where those practices are not tolerated.

**Banning sanctuary cities** was one of my emergency priorities in the 2017 legislative session, and I was proud to sign Senate Bill 4 into law, requiring local government entities and law enforcement officials to comply with federal immigration laws and detainer requests. The objective of the law is to identify dangerous criminals, not detain hardworking families or innocent children. Law enforcement officers in Texas were already allowed to ask about a lawfully detained individual's immigration status. This law does not require law enforcement to ask; it allows it. This approach has been ruled on and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Texas law specifically prohibits racial profiling and discrimination. Banning sanctuary cities makes all of Texas safer, and I will continue to ensure this ban is enforced.

### Texas Homeland Security Grants Division

Within the Office of the Governor, the **Homeland Security Grants Division** promotes strategies to prevent terrorism and other catastrophic events and to prepare communities for the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to the security and resilience of Texas and the nation.

#### Homeland Security: Border Prosecutions

In 2017, my Homeland Security Grants Division awarded \$4 million to support the **Border**

**Prosecution Unit (BPU)**, a collaborative initiative involving the Texas Department of Public Safety and each of the 17 district attorneys in the border jurisdictions of Texas. Prosecutors work in tandem with law enforcement agencies to identify and target border-based transnational criminal activity, harnessing the collective investigatory and courtroom resources to fight the growing occurrence of violent crimes committed by transnational criminal organizations. In addition, BPU attorneys are assigned to the **Texas Anti-Gang Centers**. BPU grant outcomes for FY 2017 included:

- 5,148 border crime cases filed;
- 4,227 border crime cases prosecuted; and
- 2,199 border crime cases resulting in convictions or community supervision.

#### Homeland Security: Border Law Enforcement

During 2017, my Homeland Security Grants Division awarded over \$32 million to sustain interagency law enforcement operations and local law enforcement patrol efforts. Grant outcomes for FY 2017 included:

- 9,910 arrests made by law enforcement officers;
- 761,000 hours of overtime worked by officers in support of border operations;
- Over 4 million miles logged by officers on patrol; and
- 96,000 traffic citations issued while on patrol.

#### Homeland Security: Terrorism Preparedness

During 2017, my Homeland Security Grants Division awarded more than \$56 million to jurisdictions across the state to build, sustain and deliver the capabilities necessary to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to and recover from acts of terrorism. Included in this amount:

- \$17.5 million for **Special Response Teams** including SWAT, bomb squads and hazmat teams; purchases included body armor, ballistic protection, surveillance equipment and robots as well as specialized training and exercises;
- \$12 million to **improve radio interoperability** across Texas; purchases included more than 2,000 mobile and portable radios for first responders as well as repeaters and maintenance services;

- \$11 million for **homeland security planning** efforts including funding for nearly 200 homeland security professionals across the state;
- \$5 million for security staff, monitoring and surveillance equipment to **protect critical infrastructure** sites throughout Texas;
- \$4.4 million to enhance **emergency operations centers** through investments in qualified emergency management personnel, specialized software and deployable incident command vehicles; and
- \$3.5 million to sustain **Texas Fusion Centers** operating as focal points for the analysis, gathering and sharing of threat-related information between federal, state and local governments; centers are located within DPS and in Austin, Houston, Dallas, El Paso and San Antonio.

### Criminal Justice Division

The goal of the **Criminal Justice Division** (CJD) within the Office of the Governor is to improve public safety and support victims of crime by filling system gaps and promoting innovative solutions to common challenges. This year, CJD awarded \$255 million in criminal justice and victim services grants to local law enforcement, domestic violence, child sex trafficking, victim assistance and public safety organizations across the state for programs including:

- The expansion of the **Texas Anti-Gang Program** to six multi-jurisdictional centers around the state;
- Over \$18 million for **anti-trafficking efforts** and to **help trafficking victims**, including a regional continuum of care for young survivors, from identification to long-term care, including care coordination, residential services and personal advocacy;
- A new program to **reduce the backlog of sexual assault kits** in our state's labs and ensure **Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners** have the equipment and support they need to provide care, compassion and careful evidence collection for victims;

- Support for the training needs of **Domestic Violence High Risk Teams**, which unite law enforcement, medical professionals and victims' advocates to identify and monitor the most dangerous perpetrators; and to encourage more grants for GPS monitoring of abusers;
- Free **active-shooter training** for 1,173 school marshals, school police and university police officers along with 3,254 other law enforcement officials through the ALERRT program; and
- \$500,000 to begin the important effort of **removing invasive carrizo cane** along the Rio Grande River that puts the lives of border and law enforcement officers at risk.



The Texas Governor's Mansion was illuminated in blue on national **Law Enforcement Appreciation Day** on January 9, during **National Police Week** in May and on **Texas Fallen Law Enforcement Officer Day** on July 7 to show gratitude for the men and women who protect our communities.

### Criminal Justice: Child Sex Trafficking

The **Child Sex Trafficking Team** (CSTT) within my Criminal Justice Division works with public and private partners to develop comprehensive strategies to combat child sex trafficking and provide victims the services they need to heal and thrive. Their approach is based on best practices from around the country and is child-centered, trauma-informed, collaborative and continuously improving. The team partners with and provides resources to

Children's Advocacy Centers, Court Appointed Special Advocates, child-placing agencies, churches, nonprofit shelters and other youth-serving programs throughout the state.

In the past fiscal year, CSTT worked with stakeholders in the **Houston** and **Dallas-Fort Worth** regions to build coordinated care teams and protocols for child sex trafficking victims. The team has also funded a new director of human trafficking and child exploitation at the Department of Family and Protective Services, as well as specialized foster care programs, advocacy programs and drop-in centers at nonprofit agencies across the state. It has partnered with the **National Center for Missing & Exploited Children** to train law enforcement and child welfare teams in identifying and intervening in child sexual exploitation, and funded anti-trafficking programs at Boys and Girls Clubs throughout Texas.

### **Criminal Justice: Violent Crime, Anti-Gang Task Forces**

During my time as Governor, my office has continued to fund the **Texas Anti-Gang Center** in Houston, where multiple law enforcement and criminal justice partners are co-located specifically to combat gang activity in the area.

To crack down on the alarming rise and brutality of gang-related and violent crime in Houston and Harris County, I directed the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) in April to provide assistance to local law enforcement to combat crime in areas experiencing high levels of violence and to establish a **Tactical Operations Center in Houston** to enhance and coordinate operations around the clock. I also authorized \$500,000 in new funding from my Criminal Justice Division to increase Texas Anti-Gang Center resources in the Houston area. Through the end of 2017, more than 1,487 arrests had been made by DPS, including 247 violent or high-threat offenders, some of whom were known robbery suspects. From April through the end of 2017, DPS arrested 119 robbery suspects from 48 highly organized and coordinated take-over robbery crews responsible for 293 suspected robberies.

In October, I directed DPS to also deploy additional tactical resources to support the **San Antonio Police**

**Department Violent Crimes Task Force** to combat gang-related activity and the double-digit growth in violent crime in San Antonio and Bexar County. The San Antonio Police Department has implemented a model task force approach to combat escalating violent crime; increasing state resources committed to this effort will bolster the overall impact. Through the end of 2017, DPS made 835 arrests and 210 drug seizures. And with funding from my office, a Texas Anti-Gang Center is scheduled to open in San Antonio at the beginning of 2018.

### **Protecting Texans: CPS Reforms**

**T**he primary goal of government is to keep our citizens safe and secure. It is perhaps our most sacred duty when it comes to children who are in the state's care because of dire and desperate circumstances. That is why, as Governor, I declared **Child Protective Services (CPS)** reforms an emergency item for the 2017 legislative session.

Even before the start of the session in January, my office was working to get CPS much-needed resources. With \$142 million in **new emergency funding** in December 2016 and internal agency reforms, including increased accountability, added training and a renewed focus on the quality of care, we are already seeing great improvements in the timeliness of at-risk children being first seen by CPS, in children being placed with relatives and in children being adopted within 12 months.

Cultural changes at the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) have also led to improved collaboration with law enforcement and foster care providers, as well as stronger retention of qualified and educated staff with the hiring surge decreasing investigation caseloads.

The phenomenal growth in outreach to faith-based and philanthropic groups, led by the First Lady and DFPS Commissioner Hank Whitman, to create a **Network of Nurture** and increase the number of families available for foster care is also heartening. We need a legion of families in every county who can open their homes and open their hearts to fostering our vulnerable children. When done right, foster care yields tremendous results.

To ensure we were doing all that we could to protect Texas children, my Criminal Justice Division also provided **\$547,000 in funding to emergency shelters** and residential facilities to help reduce the number of high-needs children in foster care currently without placements.

**Enacting CPS Reforms** was one of my emergency legislative priorities in 2017, and in May I was proud to sign several bills that will reform our foster care system, allowing CPS to place more children with relatives, increasing capacity of foster homes by streamlining regulations and moving toward a community-based care system. Working together, and with strong partners in the Texas Legislature, we can continue to make CPS what it should be: a protector of Texas children.



### Protecting Texans: School Safety

Texas schools should be safe places for our children to learn and advance. Texas schools are filled with some of the best teachers in the country, but unfortunately a small number of them have abused their position, and as a parent I find this abuse of trust abhorrent. This type of behavior is unacceptable, and Texas will protect its children from sexual predators in our classrooms.

In May, I signed a bill **cracking down on inappropriate teacher-student relationships** in Texas. Teachers who engage in an inappropriate relationship with a student will lose their teaching certification and license and their taxpayer pension. Administrators, superintendents and principals who turn a blind eye to such misconduct will be punished. And school districts must now adopt a written policy to prevent

improper electronic communications between school employees and a student.

### Police Protection

**T**he job of our law enforcement community is becoming more difficult as the threats our officers face continue to increase. The State of Texas will not sit idly by and tolerate these actions against officers who are simply doing their job to uphold the law and protect the people of Texas.

In January 2017, I announced that my Homeland Security Grants Division awarded the City of Dallas more than \$1 million in **grant funds for personal protective equipment** including ballistic helmets and bullet proof vests. This grant followed the aftermath of the deadly attack on Dallas peace officers in July 2016 and is in addition to an earlier grant of \$616,000 to better equip police officers and prepare for efficient large-scale emergencies.

In June, I was proud to sign my **Police Protection Act** into law, strengthening penalties for crimes against law enforcement officers and making targeted attacks against law enforcement a hate crime. And with strong bipartisan support in the Texas Legislature, I provided \$23 million in **grant funding for rifle-resistant vests** to police departments across the state. Law enforcement officers from 453 different jurisdictions will now be supplied with nearly 33,000 rifle-resistant vests designed to protect against high-caliber rounds.

For our law enforcement officers to stand between us and all that threatens, we must stand behind them. And as long as I am Governor, Texas will have their back.





### Proclamation: United in Loss and Prayer

The act of craven cowardice and evil inflicted on the **Sutherland Springs** community on Nov. 5, 2017, deeply touched the core of who we are as faithful people. First Lady Cecilia Abbott and I are deeply saddened by this tragedy; we express our sincerest condolences to all affected by this evil act and offer our thoughts and prayers to the families of the victims. Our hearts are heavy at the anguish in this small town, but in times of tragedy, we see the very best of Texas. May God comfort those who have lost a loved one, may God grant strength to the injured and may He heal the hurt in our communities. I also wish to thank and commend our law enforcement and our brave first responders who answered the call of duty at the First Baptist Church of Sutherland Springs. Texans remain strong and resilient, with the support and care of our helping communities.

### In the News: Safety and Security

**Feb. 27:** Governor Abbott offers a Crime Stoppers [reward of up to \\$10,000](#) in the shooting death of eight-year-old De'Maree Adkins.

**April 3:** Governor Abbott offers a [reward of up to \\$15,000](#) in the murder of Assistant Chief Deputy Clint Greenwood; with a **Baytown** Crime Stoppers award, the offer totals \$50,000.

**April 4:** Governor Abbott addresses a workshop on collaborative approaches for [recovering child sex trafficking victims](#).

**May 19:** Governor Abbott and Cecilia Abbott [mourn the loss of San Antonio firefighter](#) Scott Deem.

**May 27:** Governor Abbott signs Senate Bill 42 into law, [increasing security for judges](#).

**June 30:** Governor Abbott orders the Texas flags in the City of **San Antonio** to be lowered to half-staff in [honor of fallen Officer Miguel Moreno](#).

**July 23:** Governor Abbott expresses his [outrage at human trafficking deaths](#) in **San Antonio**.

**Sept. 11:** Governor Abbott presents the [2017 Star of Texas Awards](#) to peace officers, firefighters and emergency medical first responders who have demonstrated extraordinary valor and courage.

**Sept. 19:** Governor Abbott announces Texas will partner with FirstNet and AT&T to deliver [wireless broadband network](#) to the public safety community.

**Sept. 25:** Governor Abbott awards a grant to the **Dallas County** District Attorney's Office for a new [Crimes Against Children Unit](#).

**Oct. 26:** Governor Abbott awards a \$4.6 million grant to [Child Advocacy Centers of Texas](#).

**Nov. 4:** Governor Abbott and Cecilia Abbott [mourn the death of DPS Senior Trooper](#) Thomas Nipper, who was tragically killed in the line of duty.

**Nov. 23:** Governor Abbott and Cecilia Abbott offer [prayers following the shooting death](#) of a DPS State Trooper in **Freestone County**.

**Dec. 4:** Governor Abbott and Cecilia Abbott [offer condolences for a San Marcos police officer](#) shot and killed in the line of duty.

## Serving Those Who Serve

**A**s Americans, we owe our respect and enduring gratitude to the men and women who have served in our U.S. Armed Forces, and to those who today stand ever ready both here and abroad. In Texas, that tradition of military service runs deep. In addition to active duty service members, we are blessed to be home to 1.6 million veterans and their families. And though we can never fully repay the debt, to honor all who have sacrificed and served on our behalf, I proclaimed Feb. 2 as **Texas Military Heroes Day**.

The **15 major military installations** in Texas, critical for the defense of our nation, add \$136.6 billion to the state's economy and support, directly and indirectly, more than 800,000 jobs in communities across this great state.

The [Texas Military Preparedness Commission](#) in the Office of the Governor advises on defense and military issues and on strategies to strengthen the position of Texas military installations in preparation for any future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) round. The commission is composed of 13 members appointed by the Governor and serving six-year staggered terms, typically representing an installation in their community. In December, I announced a new round of grants totaling \$20 million from TPMP's [Defense Economic Adjustment Assistance Grant program](#) to assist defense communities that may be positively or negatively impacted by a future BRAC. The funds will be invested in infrastructure projects and other initiatives to ensure that our military installations continue to add unmatched value.

I'm proud of our support for Texas veterans as they transition back into the workforce. In my first two years in office, we lowered financial barriers to help our veterans create jobs by exempting new veteran-owned businesses from franchise taxes and by waiving licensing and exam fees. We've since expanded fee exemptions and added new programs, like **Texas Operation Welcome Home**, providing \$4 million in grant funding over the next two years for transition skills training in high-growth fields, and **Military Family Support**, providing \$1 million for employment assistance for military spouses. We've



Governor Abbott met with commanders of U.S. military installations in Texas following the **Texas Military Summit** in December at the Texas Capitol, where he shared his unwavering commitment to support the mission of the military, and enhance and protect the 15 major military installations in Texas.

also added employment and training opportunities for military service members and their families through the **Texas Transition Alliance**. And in June, we launched **We Hire Vets**, recognizing employers with a veteran workforce of 10 percent or more.

Finally, in the 2017 legislative session, we increased access to **mental health care for our veterans**, reflecting our commitment to address their unseen wounds and reduce the tragic suicide rate among our state's veteran population.

But there is more we can do — more that we will do — in the year ahead. Until then, may God bless all who serve, and may He forever bless these United States of America.



## Life and liberty: Protecting Texans' fundamental rights

### Protecting Life

**B**ecause we cannot hear their cries, it is perhaps our most sacred calling to protect the most vulnerable among us — the unborn. Texas is again leading the way in protecting innocent life, and I celebrate all that we have accomplished together. There is now an entire generation of young women who recognize that a sonogram is their baby's first picture.

Protecting the unborn and women in crisis will always be a priority for me. And thanks to my partners in the Texas Legislature, I was proud to sign several pro-life bills this year, including three from my **LIFE Initiative**.

In Texas, partial-birth abortions and dismemberment abortions are now banned. The sale or donation of baby body parts is prohibited. And burial or cremation of babies lost to abortion is now required — the basic dignity human life demands.

To further protect Texas values and Texans' lives, funding was renewed for the **Women's Health Program**, providing pregnancy testing, cancer and HIV screening and other women's health services at no cost to eligible women in Texas. Funding was also expanded for the **Alternatives to Abortion Program**, which works in concert with pregnancy resource centers, maternity homes and adoption agencies to provide women with pregnancy and parenting information as well as material services.

Below: Governor Abbott celebrating one of the many blessings of life on Thanksgiving Day.



Also after the 2017 legislative sessions, **no Texan will be forced to pay** for health insurance that covers elective abortions. The state is also **strengthening reporting requirements** related to abortions performed on minors and related to health complications resulting from any abortion performed. And to find solutions to end the compounded tragedy of pregnancy-related deaths of women, the **Task Force on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity** is extended to 2023.

Finally, to **strengthen patient protections** at the end of natural life, we closed a loophole in state law that had previously allowed doctors to place do-not-resuscitate orders on patients without their consent.



## Protecting Religious Liberty

Freedom of religion is the most sacred of our rights. It is what makes us America, what gave our nation its start. Efforts to erode religious liberty are a threat to all liberty, and our religious leaders must be absolutely secure in the knowledge that religious freedom is beyond the reach of government. I was proud to sign the **Sermon Safeguard Bill** to shield our pastors' sermons from subpoena and their right to speak freely about their faith. I also signed legislation **protecting the religious liberties of faith-based organizations that care for and help place foster children** in loving homes. As Governor, I will always fight to preserve our religious liberty as Americans, and as Texans.

## Protecting Property Rights

In Texas, of all places, property rights matter. Texans will now be able to **vote on whether a city can annex areas outside of its limits**. Municipalities are now also restricted from overaggressive fees charged for the removal of trees on private property, and they must now offer **tree-planting credits** to offset any tree-removal fees charged. And there is still work to be done to provide real property tax relief to Texans.

## Protecting Freedom

Laws limiting responsible gun owners' abilities to own and carry their guns only increases criminals' monopoly on gun possession. Following last session's successes — signing open carry and campus carry into law — we expanded liberty even more in Texas. Because no law-abiding Texan should be priced out of the ability to exercise his or her right to self-defense, we've **cut the license to carry a handgun fee** to \$40 a year and **waived the fee for members of Texas' military forces and law enforcement officers**.

## Protecting Your Vote

It is a primary function of government to protect a citizen's right to vote. To not do so is to dilute the power of the people, and I will not allow the integrity of the ballot box to be compromised in Texas. That is why I signed legislation **strengthening penalties for mail-in ballot fraud** in Texas.

### In the News: Life and Liberty

**May 1:** Governor Abbott attends the [Texas National Day of Prayer](#) Breakfast in **Austin**, where he delivered remarks and joined in prayer with Texans from across the state.

**May 4:** Governor Abbott speaks about the importance of prayer in his own life at the [National Day of Prayer](#) observance at Sam's Memorial Stadium in **Brownsville**.

## Good governance: Serving the people of Texas

**APPOINTMENTS:** Because ours is a representative citizen government, my [Appointments Office](#) is constantly seeking the most talented and qualified individuals to serve our state. More than 350 appointments were made in 2017 to state boards, commissions, councils and other roles. The majority of these are volunteer positions, and I am grateful to these outstanding Texans for their service.

**CONSTITUENT CONTACTS:** Through the year, I enjoyed many conversations with you, including more than 260,000 calls, emails and letters, plus social media contacts with my office online.

### Social Media Impressions:

- 94,930,564 Facebook
- 69,180,026 Twitter
- [Tweet](#) you engaged with most
- [FB post](#) you engaged with the most

**CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT:** For decades, the federal government has grown too big and too controlling — at a cost to its necessary but limited constitutional functions. I applaud the new administration for already halting some federal overreaches, but there is more work to do. This wasn't a problem caused by one president, and it won't be solved by one president. It must be fixed by the people themselves.

This past year, we took an important step toward restraining a runaway federal government and returning power back to the states and their respective citizens as our Founders intended and as the Constitution established. The Texas Legislature heard and responded to the voices of those they represent, and I applaud their passage of my emergency item, a [Convention of States Resolution](#), reinforcing Texas' status as a champion of limited government and individual freedom.



In April, after activating [Texas Task Force One and Two](#) for search and rescue, Governor Abbott visited [Van Zandt County](#) to speak with residents and survey tornado damage. In response to the [Panhandle](#) wildfires the month prior, the Governor deployed strike teams to assist local first responders and temporarily suspended state restrictions to speed transport of livestock feed to the disaster area.

**REFORMS:** Among reforms signed into law this year, with more work to do in the year ahead:

■ **Anti-BDS Bill:** Prohibits all state agencies from contracting with, and certain public funds from investing in, companies that boycott Israel;

■ **Ethics Bills:** Elected or appointed public officials who commit acts of public corruption are ineligible for state pensions; lawmakers and officials must disclose business ties with government entities; campaign accounts may not be used by elected officials after leaving office for lobbying; and

■ **Tort Reform:** Reduces hailstorm lawsuit abuse that caused a decline in available coverage while protecting Texans' rights to sue an insurance company.

**VOLUNTEER AWARDS:** The First Lady and I hosted the **2017 Governor's Volunteer Awards** at the Governor's Mansion in October. Presented in conjunction with the OneStar Foundation, the awards honor individuals and organizations in Texas that have gone above and beyond to enrich the lives of those in their communities and throughout Texas through volunteerism and service. I'd like you to meet one of this year's 11 honorees — the youngest.

First Lady's Rising Star Award winner **Micah Pinson** is only 13 years old, but he has already performed several years of volunteer service. In 2011, at the age of seven, Micah decided that he wanted to give back to the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children in Dallas, the hospital that has helped him with a hand deformity. Micah conceived a community service project — a toy drive — that today stands as the largest single toy donation for the hospital. In total, more than 25,000 toys have been collected over the last six years, and 2016 was the best year ever with more than 10,000 toys donated. Each year, Micah seeks



ways to involve more community and business leaders in this project and sees this not only as a way of giving back to the hospital that helped him so much, but also as a blessing in his life.

### In the News: Good Governance

**Jan. 5:** Governor Abbott appoints [Rolando Pablos as Texas Secretary of State](#).

**Jan. 8:** Governor Abbott meets with Her Excellency, Tsai Ing-wen, [President of the Republic of China \(Taiwan\)](#) in **Houston** to discuss energy, trade relations and commercial ties.

**March 10:** Governor Abbott meets with [Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau](#) in **Houston** to discuss energy, trade and commercial ties.

**May 5:** Governor Abbott and Texas Department of State Health Services Commissioner Dr. John Hellerstedt host a [Zika prevention roundtable](#) with community leaders and health officials from **Cameron** and **Hidalgo counties**.

**June 7:** Governor Abbott and Vice President Mike Pence welcome the [new astronaut candidate class](#) at the NASA Johnson Space Center.

**June 8:** Governor Abbott speaks with [Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) regarding a number of pro-Israel bills signed into law during the 85th Legislature.

**June 27:** Governor Abbott releases a statement after EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt announces the [withdrawal of the Waters of the United States rule](#).

**Sept. 6:** Governor Abbott speaks with [German Chancellor Angela Merkel](#) to discuss the response to Hurricane Harvey.

**Nov. 2:** Governor Abbott proclaims Nov. 3, 2017, as [Houston Astros Day](#).

**Nov. 23:** Governor Abbott joins First Lady Cecilia Abbott as a [volunteer with Meals on Wheels](#) on Thanksgiving Day.



The worst  
of storms  
brought out  
the **best** in people.



## Neighbors helping neighbors: Texans rise to higher ground

**N**o force of nature is more powerful than Texans helping Texans, Americans helping Americans. In that generosity of spirit, Hurricane Harvey more than met its match.

And we are grateful so many lives were saved.

With the enormity of Hurricane Harvey's destruction now revealed across nearly 50,000 square miles of Texas — from our small coastal communities near Corpus Christi to Houston, Beaumont and beyond — I want to share my deep gratitude for all who came to our aid.

In the moments of heroism and selflessness witnessed again and again since Harvey first made landfall, and in the historic flooding that followed, we have seen the greatness of America.

The armada of citizens and first responders who rushed to rescue those who could not save themselves reaffirms the value of every life and the unshakable bonds of our humanity.

The overwhelming outpouring of support, resources and prayers from individuals, churches, businesses, emergency responders and elected officials from around the country — and from leaders from around the world — has been truly inspiring.

The damage from the storm was staggering even beyond its first landfall. But Texans have been challenged by disasters before. Whether hurricane, flood or fire, we have always come together and been made stronger. And though the road to recovery will now be long, we will again triumph over tragedy — because of the resilience of our people.

In Rockport-Fulton on the morning after Harvey's first direct hit as a Category 4 hurricane, still-stunned

residents gathered outside one of the local churches. They were Baptists, Episcopalians and more, but the only denomination that mattered this day was that they were Texans. And though faced with catastrophic damages to their own homes and businesses, they began to pick up every brick that had fallen from the church walls.

We are following their example. We are rebuilding. Brick by brick. Family by family. Community by community.

In each community, it was because of the courage and calm leadership of local emergency managers, elected officials, law enforcement and first responders that so many lives were spared.

The strength and mass of this hurricane and the days of record flooding that followed were unprecedented in recent history as was the aggressive advance

action and coordination of federal, state and local emergency management resources and personnel.

I am grateful to our federal partners for their swift action in approving our disaster requests. We are thankful for the President's visits and for those of the Vice President and many Cabinet members, as well as for the rapid response by Congress in providing initial recovery funding.

I thank the tireless professionals of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, U.S. Navy, Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Division of Emergency Management, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and all of our state agencies and our fearless first responders. And I appreciate the support offered by my fellow governors, and the work crews and

**The armada of citizens and first responders who rushed to rescue those who could not save themselves reaffirms the value of every life and the unshakable bonds of our humanity.**

emergency responders who traveled from states far and near to assist our communities.

Our greatest thanks is to our neighbors — everyday citizens who rushed to our aid with open arms, and who are now opening their homes, their hearts and their wallets to help our displaced families. Many families have lost every possession, but — because

of your generosity — they have not lost their faith in the greatness of America.

We mourn every life lost. Losses cut deep. And the road to recovery will be long. But we are Texans. We are Americans. And will rebuild Texas. Together.

**May God continue to bless Texas and these United States of America.**

<b>TEXAS-SIZED RECOVERY: Hurricane Harvey in numbers</b>		
<p>Estimated Texas Rainfall</p> <p><b>19</b> TRILLION GALLONS</p> <p>IMPACTING NEARLY <b>50,000</b> SQUARE MILES &amp; MORE THAN <b>8.8 MILLION</b> TEXANS</p>	<p>Record inches</p> <p><b>60+</b></p>	<p><b>PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION</b></p> <p><b>53 COUNTIES</b></p>
		<p><b>STATE DECLARATION</b></p> <p><b>60 COUNTIES</b></p>
		<p>42,399 Texans at peak in</p> <p><b>258</b> SHELTERS</p>
<p><b>MORE THAN 35,000 RESCUES RECORDED</b></p>		
<p>Texans have received</p> <p><b>\$12.8 BILLION</b></p> <p><small>in FEMA grants to households, National Flood Insurance claims payments &amp; SBA disaster loans</small></p>	<p>More than <b>3.2 MILLION</b> meals served. More than <b>3.4 MILLION</b> volunteer hours recorded by more than <b>91,000</b> volunteers. More than <b>16,000</b> Texans' homes mucked and gutted by volunteers. More than <b>11.4 MILLION</b> cubic yards of debris collected.</p>	
<p>AS OF 01/25/2018</p>		

**On page 28:** Portraits from the field of survivors, emergency responders and volunteers following Hurricane Harvey. Though losses ran deep, many lives were spared, including the tiny Texan born a week before landfall and shown in Governor Abbott's arms on a visit to **Rockport** with Vice President Mike Pence and Second Lady Karen Pence. (Top and bottom row of photos: Texas Military Department)

## STEPS TO RECOVERY

**A snapshot of action taken by the Governor; not inclusive of all briefings, hearings, proclamations, actions or events in Texas.**

**Aug. 23:** In advance of Tropical Depression Harvey, Governor Abbott orders the multi-agency State Operations Center (SOC) to elevate its readiness level and directs state agencies to make available any and all state resources to assist in preparation, rescue and recovery. The Governor preemptively declares a state of disaster for 30 counties most at risk of the anticipated storm, activates the Texas National Guard and Texas State Guard and asks Texans to heed all local warnings.

State resources engaged in emergency preparation:

Department of Information Resources  
Public Utility Commission of Texas  
Railroad Commission of Texas  
State Auditor's Office  
State Procurement Division  
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service  
Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (Texas Task Force One)  
Texas A&M Forest Service  
Texas Animal Health Commission  
Texas Attorney General's Office  
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality  
Texas Commission on Fire Protection  
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts  
Texas Department of Agriculture  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services  
Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs  
Texas Department of Insurance  
Texas Department of Public Safety  
Texas Department of State Health Services  
Texas Department of Transportation  
Texas Division of Emergency Management  
Texas Education Agency  
Texas General Land Office  
Texas Health and Human Services Commission  
Texas Military Department  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

**Aug. 24:** Harvey is upgraded to a tropical storm; Governor Abbott discusses hurricane preparedness and the importance of local evacuation warnings with Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Elaine Duke and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Administrator Brock Long. President Donald Trump calls Governor Abbott and pledges all available federal resources. The Governor urges all Texans to heed local officials' warnings, strongly consider voluntary evacuation orders and strictly comply with all mandatory evacuation orders.



**Aug. 25:** Following a briefing by the Texas Division of Emergency Management and all activated state agencies at the SOC, Governor Abbott holds a press conference and again urges all Texans to heed local officials' warnings, strongly consider voluntary evacuation orders and strictly comply with all mandatory evacuation orders. Governor Abbott requests a Presidential Disaster Declaration in advance for six counties in order to more rapidly secure federal aid to supplement state and local recovery efforts. The Governor visits Texans seeking refuge at a San Antonio shelter, and suspends state and local hotel and motel occupancy tax for relief personnel and victims of the storm.

**Harvey makes landfall at 10 p.m. near Rockport as a Category 4 hurricane.**

**Aug. 26:** Governor Abbott contacts local officials in the region by phone to hear damage estimates firsthand and to offer support. The Governor begins receiving formal daily briefings from the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) and

FEMA, provides a media update at the SOC and adds 20 Texas counties to the State Disaster Declaration. Following multiple media interviews and while receiving reports from the region on rescue and recovery operations, Governor Abbott and First Lady Cecilia Abbott visit an Austin Red Cross Shelter where they help serve dinner.



**Aug. 27:** Following the daily SOC briefing and based on continuing updates from the region, Governor Abbott requests 12 Texas counties be added to the Presidential Disaster Declaration and adds four to the State Disaster Declaration. Governor Abbott requests of Secretary of Defense General James Mattis that a Texas National Guard Dual Status Command be established to allow for a single commander of both federal and state forces providing disaster response. The Governor is joined by U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Karl Schultz and agency officials at SOC for a media update on ongoing rescue and recovery operations.

**Aug. 28:** Governor Abbott activates the entire Texas National Guard, adds another four counties to the State Disaster Declaration and issues a proclamation allowing public utilities to access private property as needed to repair power lines and reconnect the electric utility grid. The Governor visits the Coastal Bend region for an on-site briefing and provides what is to become a daily media update. After an aerial tour of the region to survey the extensive damage, the Governor speaks with local officials and Texans impacted by the storm. He is joined on the ground by Senator John Cornyn and FEMA Administrator Long. At the Governor's direction

to state agencies to extend deadlines, waive fees and cut red tape, DPS begins providing a free replacement driver's license or ID card for survivors.

**Aug. 29:** Governor Abbott joins President Trump and Cabinet members in Corpus Christi to meet with local leaders and relief organizations before traveling to Austin for a detailed briefing at the SOC. They are joined by federal and state officials, including Senators John Cornyn and Ted Cruz. Governor Abbott reminds residents of Houston threatened by rising floodwaters that preserving life remains the top priority. The Governor announces an award of \$25 million in federal funds to the Texas Department of Transportation for debris removal, cleanup and transportation infrastructure repairs.

**Aug. 30:** Governor Abbott requests the addition of 14 Texas counties to the Presidential Disaster Declaration.

**Aug. 31:** Governor Abbott sends a letter to county judges outlining available assistance and increases the number of National Guard troops helping with hurricane response to 24,000. The Governor suspends vehicle registration, titling and inspection rules for hurricane victims and eases restrictions on truckers bringing fuel and relief supplies into the state. Governor Abbott and Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott join Vice President Mike Pence and Second Lady of the United States Karen Pence on a visit to Rockport and Victoria to meet with victims, volunteers and first responders. The Governor proclaims Sept. 3, 2017, as a Day of Prayer in Texas, then Governor Abbott and Vice President Pence assist with debris clearing in Rockport.



**Sept. 1:** Governor Abbott announces that Gulf Coast refineries are coming back online, that Louisiana, Oklahoma and New Mexico are shipping gas into Texas, and that a pipeline carrying gasoline to Oklahoma has been reversed, keeping the fuel in the state, as the Port of Corpus Christi also opens for barges loaded with fuel. President Trump authorizes an increase in federal funds for debris removal and emergency protective measures, increasing the federal cost-share from 75 percent to 90 percent. Governor Abbott announces the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation will collaborate with the OneStar Foundation to form the [Rebuild Texas Fund](#). The Governor requests three more Texas counties be added to the Presidential Disaster Declaration and issues a proclamation warning against price gouging.

**Sept. 2:** Governor Abbott and Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott greet President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump in Houston for a briefing and visit with resilient victims, emergency responders and volunteers. The Governor and the President meet with Texans taking refuge at NRG Stadium where they also help serve meals. Governor Abbott and President Trump also visit the First Church of Pearland, which is serving as a hurricane relief center for victims of the storm. Members of the President's Cabinet, Senator Cruz and Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner join them for the day.

**Sept. 3:** Governor Abbott joins in the National and Texas Day of Prayer for victims of Hurricane Harvey at Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin. Governor Abbott meets with Senator John Cornyn, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy and Chairman Michael McCaul at the SOC to discuss the congressional response to the costliest disaster to ever hit Texas.

**Sept. 4:** Governor Abbott announces FEMA has approved his request for Community Disaster Loan assistance to help cities maintain operating budgets and provide essential services. The Governor requests seven Texas counties be added to the Presidential Disaster Declaration.



**Sept. 5:** Governor Abbott visits Wharton and Beaumont to thank local officials for their tireless efforts on behalf of their citizens.

**Sept. 6:** Governor Abbott thanks the U.S. House of Representatives for voting to allocate \$7.85 billion as an initial down payment to Texas in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey. The Governor suspends the state's waiting period for auto claims payments to hurricane victims.

**Sept. 7:** Governor Abbott announces the [Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas](#), appoints Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp as commissioner and charges the commission with efficiently and effectively bringing the resources of all state agencies together to help communities in assessing their needs and navigating state and federal resources for the rebuilding of roads, bridges, schools and government buildings. The Governor directs the Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and Texas Education Agency (TEA) to develop an education and



workforce training plan to support the rebuilding of communities and to put Texans back to work. Governor Abbott, Commissioner Sharp and state agency heads meet with local officials in Corpus Christi and Richmond. The Governor announces aerial spraying for mosquitoes will begin with added assistance from the U.S. Air Force Reserve and specially equipped cargo planes.

**Sept. 8:** Governor Abbott, Commissioner Sharp and state agency heads meet with local officials in Houston and Victoria. Governor Abbott thanks Congress for passing and the President for immediately signing a \$15.3 billion disaster relief package for several states. The Governor announces a TEA hotline with public education updates for parents, and announces the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have completed the initial assessments of all 60 Superfund sites in the area.

**Sept. 9:** Governor Abbott, Commissioner Sharp and state agency heads meet with local officials in Beaumont. The Governor sends a letter to EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt expressing his support for a Texas Water Development Board request to streamline federal funding for flood and water infrastructure projects.

**Sept. 11:** Governor Abbott announces the Texas Health and Human Services Commission will begin offering D-SNAP disaster food relief for hurricane survivors.

**Sept. 12:** Governor Abbott proclaims Sept. 12 as “Hand In Hand Day” in Texas to promote the telethon featuring George Strait, Miranda Lambert, Lyle Lovett, Robert Earl Keen, Chris Stapleton and other artists. At the Governor’s direction to state agencies to extend deadlines, waive fees and cut red tape, the state is waiving the replacement fee for copies of birth certificates for hurricane survivors.

**Sept. 13:** Governor Abbott announces a \$30 million federal grant to the Texas Workforce Commission to create temporary jobs to assist with cleanup, recovery and humanitarian efforts. The Governor announces the launch of [RebuildTexas.Today](#), a real-time resource for local officials with information on state and federal assistance available for infrastructure rebuilding. The Governor suspends the state’s seven-day waiting period for disaster unemployment insurance.

**Sept. 14:** Governor Abbott announces Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) crews, having already reopened roads for emergency responders,



**T**o help our communities rebuild critical public infrastructure — roads, bridges, schools and other public facilities — damaged or destroyed by Hurricane Harvey or the flooding that followed, I established the **Governor’s Commission to Rebuild Texas**. The Commission serves as a single point of contact for local officials to ensure we efficiently and effectively bring all state agencies together to help communities assess their needs, navigate state and federal resources, and gain access to the expertise available to help them rebuild. I then asked **John Sharp, chancellor of The Texas A&M**

**University System**, to serve as my chairman, and he committed Texas A&M System resources to support as needed. My charge to him was simple: Advocate for our communities, cut through red tape and make sure we get things done without delay so we can help Texas recover and rebuild. One of the guiding principles is to “future-proof” what is being rebuilt to mitigate future risks as much as possible. Each county judge and mayor had a Commission resource assigned to them; teams were also trained by the Texas Division of Emergency Management and FEMA and were deployed to some of the hardest hit communities to assist with completing FEMA paperwork and other processes. **Together with our communities, we will rebuild Texas even stronger than before.**

replaced signage, reactivated signals and resumed ferry service, are now removing roadside debris in the region. Governor Abbott announces that Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush will head the state's short- and long-term housing recovery efforts. [Texas Rebuilds](#) is locally led, state-supported and federally funded. The Governor adds two Texas counties to the State Disaster Declaration.

**Sept. 15:** Governor Abbott releases the first issue of the ongoing Update from the Commission to Rebuild Texas with recovery reports from state and federal agencies and local communities.

**Sept. 19:** Governor Abbott suspends state trucking regulations to aid Hurricane Irma relief in Florida.

**Sept. 20:** Governor Abbott sends a letter to county judges encouraging the utilization of disaster relief funding for their communities. Governor Abbott extends the State Disaster Declaration for now 60 Texas counties. The Governor announces TxDOT has removed approximately 432,000 cubic feet, or eight football fields, of debris from roadways in addition to local efforts to remove debris as quickly as possible. The Governor joins Attorney General Ken Paxton in a letter to President Trump, urging him to ensure that churches and religious organizations are treated equally with other nonprofits and not excluded from FEMA disaster funding.

**Sept. 21:** Governor Abbott joins George Strait and Acting DHS Secretary Duke in Rockport to reaffirm his commitment to help Texans rebuild even stronger than before.



**Sept. 22:** Governor Abbott is joined by HUD Secretary Ben Carson and Commissioner Bush in a tour of impacted housing developments in Port Arthur where they speak with survivors of the storm.



**Sept. 26:** Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Dan Patrick and Commissioner Sharp join Texas state legislators at the FEMA Joint Field Office in Austin for a briefing.

**Sept. 27:** Governor Abbott announces TxDOT has now collected more than 2.4 million cubic feet, or 45 football fields, of debris left behind by Hurricane Harvey on roadways across the four districts hardest hit by the storm.

**Sept. 29:** Governor Abbott announces all but three public school districts have returned to class. The Governor travels to Houston to present a \$50 million check for urgent debris removal to Mayor Turner.

**Oct. 4:** Governor Abbott joins by phone a bipartisan meeting of the Texas congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., to discuss urgent funding relief.

**Oct. 9:** Governor Abbott and Commissioner Sharp visit with mayors, legislators, county judges and other local officials in Aransas Pass, Port Aransas, Rockport, Refugio, Port Lavaca and Victoria.

**Oct. 10:** Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick and Commissioners Sharp and Bush visit with mayors, legislators, county judges and other local officials in Sugar Land, Wharton, Bay City, Angleton and Dickinson.

**Oct. 11:** Governor Abbott and Commissioner Sharp visit with mayors, legislators, county judges and other local officials in Port Arthur, Mont Belvieu, Dayton, Kountze and Orange.

**Oct 16:** Governor Abbott announces all Texas public school districts and charter schools are operating and all students have access to a school, whether their original campus or a new location.

**Oct. 20:** Governor Abbott extends the State Disaster Declaration for 60 Texas counties. At Governor Abbott's direction to speed debris removal, Commissioner Sharp requests Attorney General Paxton investigate a number of debris removal companies to ensure obligations are being met.

**Oct. 21:** Governor Abbott and First Lady Cecilia Abbott visit with all five living former U.S. presidents at the Deep From the Heart concert at Texas A&M benefiting hurricane relief efforts.

**Oct. 24:** Governor Abbott's request to extend the 90-day application deadline for Individual Assistance from FEMA is approved. The Governor attends the University of Texas and Texas A&M exhibition basketball game benefitting Hurricane Harvey relief.



**Oct. 25:** Governor Abbott, Lt. Governor Patrick and TDEM and FEMA officials brief President Trump on recovery efforts during a Dallas visit. The President again renewed his strong commitment to stand with the people of Texas for as long as it takes, as families, businesses and communities rebuild.

**Oct. 31:** Governor Abbott and members of the Governor's Commission to Rebuild Texas visit

Washington, D.C., to discuss Hurricane Harvey relief. The Governor meets with Office of Management and Budget officials and Senate and House leadership, including Senators Cornyn and Cruz and the Texas congressional delegation.

**Nov. 9:** Governor Abbott, in partnership with Texas House and Senate leaders, announces the approval of \$90 million in emergency debris-removal funding for disaster-declared counties.

**Nov. 15:** Governor Abbott, Vice President Pence and Energy Secretary Rick Perry receive a briefing at the FEMA Joint Field Office in Austin.



**Nov. 17:** Governor Abbott, HUD Deputy Secretary Pamela Hughes Patenaude, Senator Cornyn and Commissioner Bush announce a \$5.024 billion Community Development Block Grant fund award to support the repair of damaged homes, businesses and critical infrastructure. The Governor announces FEMA has granted Texas' request to extend the deadline for application for Individual Assistance and for Transitional Sheltering Assistance.

**Nov. 19:** Governor Abbott extends the State Disaster Declaration for 60 Texas counties.

**Nov. 28:** Governor Abbott announces a \$1 million donation of funds and equipment from Kubota Tractor Corporation to the hurricane relief effort.

**Dec. 6:** Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott welcomes the First Lady and Second Lady of the United States to Texas; they are joined by Commissioner Bush in visiting families, schools and organizations in Corpus Christi, Rockport and Aransas Pass.

**Dec. 8:** Governor Abbott continues to work with members of Congress to ensure Texans get the relief they need.

**Dec. 12:** Governor Abbott and Commissioners Sharp and Bush meet with newly named DHS Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen at the Texas Capitol.

**Dec. 18:** Governor Abbott again extends the State Disaster Declaration for 60 Texas counties affected by Hurricane Harvey.

**Dec. 20 and 21:** Governor Abbott visits League City, Port Aransas and Port Arthur to meet with local officials from the region, receive updates on the recovery and present reimbursement funds to help cover debris removal costs. The Governor visits A.C. Blunt Middle School in Aransas Pass and announces more than \$100,000 in donations and flooring from Lumber Liquidators. Governor Abbott thanks the U.S. House of Representatives for approving \$81 billion in disaster aid and reminds the U.S. Senate that Texans are in need of this critical help following the costliest natural disaster in our state's history.

**Jan. 3:** Governor Abbott and Attorney General Ken Paxton announce that FEMA has approved their request to allow churches and religious organizations to receive the same public assistance available to other nonprofits aiding in hurricane relief efforts.

**Jan. 12:** Governor Abbott announces that FEMA has granted Texas' request to extend the deadline for Transitional Sheltering Assistance to March 12, 2018. TSA helps displaced survivors who are unable to return to their homes find short-term shelter in hotels or other temporary housing locations.

**Jan. 17:** Governor Greg Abbott again extends the State Disaster Declaration for 60 Texas counties affected by Hurricane Harvey.

**Jan. 24:** Governor Abbott, in partnership with Texas House and Senate leadership, approves \$38.6 million in emergency state funding for critical direct housing programs across the Gulf region.

**Jan. 25:** Governor Abbott joins with Goldman Sachs, LiftFund and the Rebuild Texas Fund to announce a new \$7 million zero-interest microloan program to help small businesses rebuild.

## VOLUNTEERS: CRITICAL IN RECOVERY

**V**olunteer organizations are critical partners in recovery and rebuilding efforts. The **Texas Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters** include groups like Catholic Charities, Texas Baptist Men Disaster Relief, the American Red Cross and The Salvation Army, as well as associate groups like Samaritan's Purse and Team Rubicon, and many more. These organizations, along with many other community, school and church groups, donated more than 3.4 million volunteer hours helping Hurricane Harvey survivors to recover. That is an incredible gift. **The First Lady and I would like to thank all who continue to give of themselves to help their neighbors recover and rebuild. Working together, we rise to higher ground.**

## REBUILDING BY THE NUMBERS

Rebuilding efforts continue, and currently:

- Nearly 900,000 individual assistance applications received by FEMA;
- 599,194 FEMA home inspections completed;
- 251,666 Disaster Recovery Center visits;
- 75,000 Partial Repair and Essential Power for Sheltering program applicants initially contacted;
- 9,843 households currently taking advantage of FEMA's Transitional Sheltering Assistance providing short-term hotel stays;
- 5,404 reports submitted from communities to the Assistance Center at Texas A&M; 678 issues needed follow-up, and all have been resolved;
- Nearly 5,000 homes under repair and more than 1,104 completed through the Partial Repair and Essential Power for Sheltering Program;
- 1,587 families housed through the Direct Housing Program in a manufactured housing unit, travel trailer or other resources, with 2,792 in process; and
- 989 total active requests for public assistance submitted by communities to FEMA.

**For more details and the latest updates, visit [RebuildTexas.Today](https://RebuildTexas.Today).**

## From the First Lady of Texas

I have always said that what makes this state truly special is our people: Texans are generous and caring by nature. As the First Lady of Texas, my greatest honor is tapping into that compassion and encouraging more Texans to give back to their communities. And what a year it has been! Never before have I seen so many Texans giving of their hearts and hands. Here are just a few events from this past year I wanted to share with you. To read more about how Texans are helping Texans, what I call **Texanthropy**, I invite you to read [my blog](#).

Inspired by your spirit of generosity, resolve and compassion, Greg and I look forward to continuing to work in the coming year with all Texans to make our great state even stronger.

### Thanking Emergency Responders

■ In March, I had the opportunity to visit the **Amarillo Fire Department** Central Fire Station following the devastating Panhandle wildfires where lives were tragically lost when nearly half a million acres were threatened by fire. While serving the firefighters and emergency responders lunch from Dyer's BBQ, a local favorite, I shared our heartfelt gratitude for their courage and tireless service to our state and their fellow Texans. Greg and I give thanks



Cecilia Abbott addressed the Catholic Diocese of Amarillo's **20th Annual Respect Life Banquet** attended by young Texans who share the First Lady's deep passion for protecting unborn children and promoting a culture of life in Texas.

each and every day of the year for our first responders and law enforcement officers, and their families, and for all they do to keep Texans safe.

### Celebrating Small Businesses

■ Texas is big on small businesses. And like many Texans, I love the HEB commercials featuring small-business success stories from the Lone Star State, whether they are about a farmer or rancher, a secret family recipe for BBQ sauce or tasty tamales during the holidays. Another way HEB celebrates Texas-grown, locally made products is with their annual **Primo Picks Quest for Texas Best** contest. In August, I had the privilege of joining this year's festivities, where I helped honor the 25 finalists. I also got to sample many of the previous year's winning entries, and I don't envy the tough job the judges had in selecting the best! I'm so proud of all of the finalists, and I'm pleased I had the chance to help celebrate their success stories.

## Sharing Hearts and Hands

■ It warms my heart to see so many Texans sharing of themselves, and I especially love it when I see young Texans getting involved and giving back at an early age. In November, I was proud to join **Generation SERVE** at their inaugural Family Volunteer Day in Austin. This special day of service celebrates the power of families who volunteer together and parents who introduce their children to lifelong volunteerism, philanthropy and community leadership.

## Honoring Our Veterans

■ Greg and I were privileged to again join **Wreaths Across America** in a moving memorial service honoring our veterans at the Texas State Cemetery in December. We placed ceremonial wreaths on the final resting places of seven heroes, representing each branch of the U.S. military and who were either prisoners of war or killed in action. As volunteers placed wreaths on other veterans' graves across the hallowed grounds, each paused to say the names of the heroes aloud — so their memories will live on.

## Nurturing Our Children

■ Today, there are 30,000 Texas children in our state's foster care system. And providing the support that foster and adoptive children and families need is a far bigger job than state government can do

### In the News: Texas First Lady

**Fort Worth**, Jan. 12: Cecilia Abbott leads in [aiding foster care](#)

**Buda**, April 18: Texas First Lady Cecilia Abbott welcomes Buda to the [Main Street program](#)

**San Angelo**, May 28: Cecilia Abbott's visit may [bolster local nonprofits](#)

**Corpus Christi**, Aug. 29: Cecilia Abbott making a [quiet difference](#) during difficult time for Texas

**San Antonio**, Dec. 21: Cecilia Abbott on being a [Meals on Wheels volunteer](#): She won't give it up

alone. That's why this year I partnered with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services to form a **Network of Nurture** — bringing together individuals, organizations, congregations and families across the state willing to open their hearts to these children.

Early in the year, I was privileged to join musicians Radney Foster and Kyle Hutton at **The Place to Stay** concert celebrating the release of The Foster EP, an inspiring collection of songs to encourage families to enrich their lives through fostering.

I also hosted an **Adoption Month Listening Session** bringing together stakeholders from the foster care system for an open dialogue focused on raising awareness, increasing positive outcomes and building stronger families.

And it was a joy to wrap up the year joining hundreds of children and families in Beaumont for the annual **Jefferson County Child Welfare Board Foster Children's Christmas Party**. Many had lost everything in Hurricane Harvey, but the party helped to lift their spirits and brought Christmas cheer to the entire community.



**In the year ahead, I want to encourage more Texans to join our Network of Nurture — as foster parents, forever parents or support providers for our wonderful foster and adoptive families.**

May God bless you all.



## Looking to the year ahead

When Texans came together this past year — in celebrating the triumph of a World Series championship, in responding to the tragedy of lives lost to natural disasters and to senseless violence, and in sharing the daily miracles of life — we saw the best of Texas. United, we are a powerful force for good.

**T**he story of Texas has long been written by men and women willing to dig deep, work hard and stake their future on an idea. That pioneering spirit still fuels our shared prosperity today. In our small town downtowns to our big city centers, more Texans are striving and more Texans are thriving.

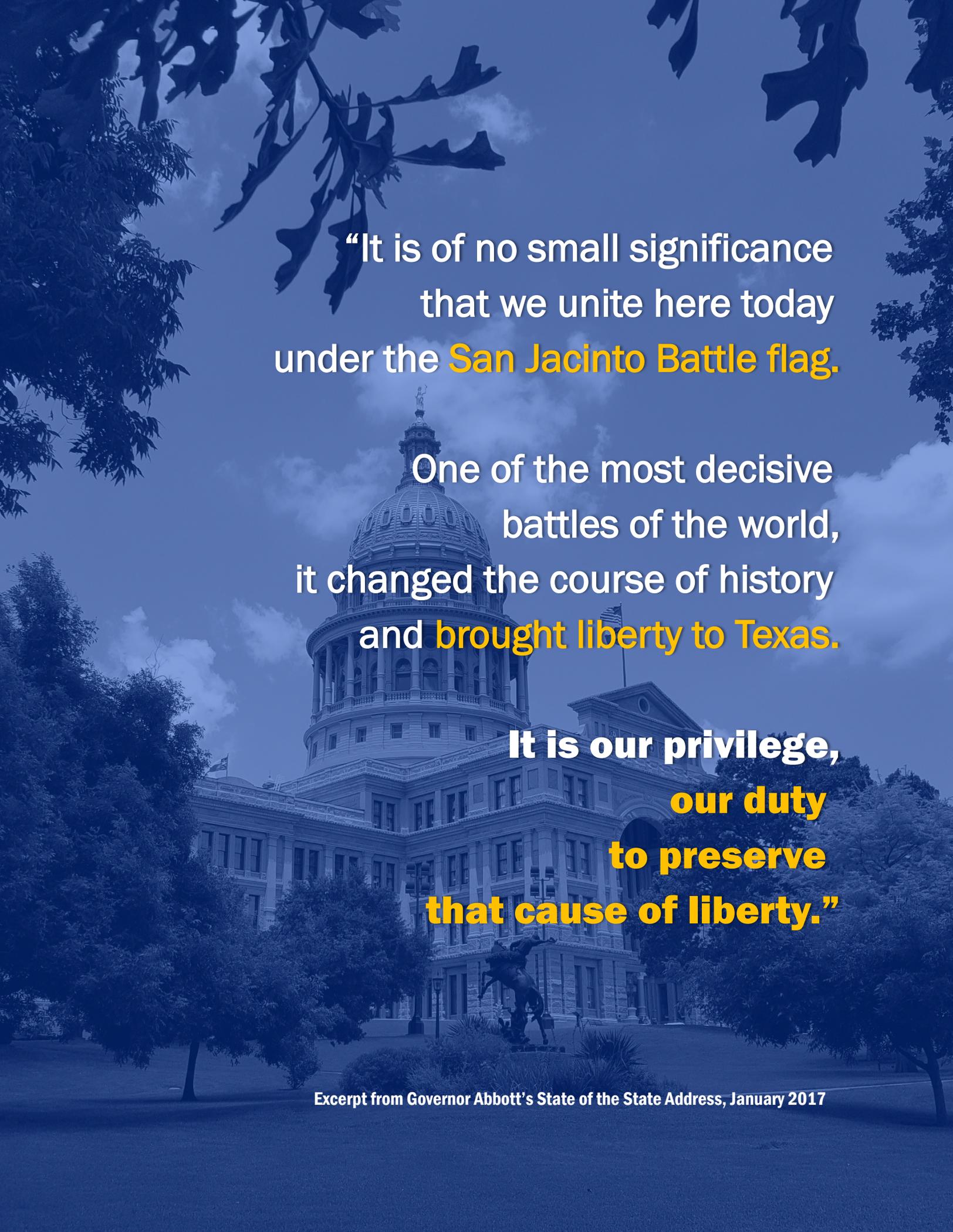
The brighter path to opportunity we are building for Texas families today, and for the generations yet to come, rests on a solid foundation of success and all we accomplished together this year.

Businesses are growing here, families are growing here, innovation is growing here. And our economy is booming.

Yet, we have more left to do to expand economic opportunity, advance education, preserve safety and security, and protect life and liberty.

In Texas, the promise of the future knows no bounds. And I look forward to working by your side in the year ahead as we continue to build an even stronger Texas — together.

**May God forever bless the great State of Texas.**

The image features a blue-tinted photograph of the Texas State Capitol building in Austin. The building's iconic dome is the central focus, surrounded by classical architectural details like columns and arches. In the foreground, there are silhouettes of trees and a statue of a cowboy on a rearing horse. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds. The overall mood is solemn and historical.

“It is of no small significance  
that we unite here today  
under the **San Jacinto Battle** flag.

One of the most decisive  
battles of the world,  
it changed the course of history  
and **brought liberty to Texas.**

**It is our privilege,  
our duty  
to preserve  
that cause of liberty.”**

Excerpt from Governor Abbott's State of the State Address, January 2017

# Because of you, Texas is No. 1 in the nation.

## **Agricultural:**

Texas is No. 1 in cattle, cotton, hay, sheep, goats, and wool and mohair production as well as in the number of farms and ranches, [TDA](#)

## **Best Business Climate:**

Texas is No. 1, [Business Facilities](#), and Executive Survey, [Site Selection](#)

## **Best Cities for Economic Growth Potential:**

Austin is No. 1 and San Antonio is No. 4 for large metros; San Marcos is No. 7 and Sugar Land No. 9 for smaller metros, [Business Facilities](#)

## **Best Cities for Hispanic Entrepreneurs:**

Laredo is No. 1, El Paso is No. 2, Corpus Christi is No. 4, Brownsville is No. 5, Amarillo is No. 8, [WalletHub](#)

## **Best Cities to Start a Career:**

Houston is No. 1, Dallas is No. 5, Austin is No. 13, San Antonio is No. 15, [BankRate](#)

## **Best Infrastructure:**

Texas is No. 1, [Business Facilities](#)

## **Best State for Business:**

Texas is No. 1, 13th year in a row, [Chief Executive](#)

## **Capital Investments:**

Texas is No. 1, 5th Governor's Cup in a row, [Site Selection](#)

## **Competitive Labor Environment:**

Texas is No. 1, [Area Development](#)

## **Economic Climate:**

Texas is No. 1, [Forbes](#)

## **Exports:**

Texas is No. 1, 15th year in a row, [Census data](#)

## **Fastest-Growing Cities:**

Conroe is No. 1, Frisco is No. 2, McKinney is No. 3, Georgetown is No. 5, New Braunfels is No. 9, [Census Data](#)

## **Investments, Foreign and Domestic:**

Texas is No. 1, [IBM's 2017 Global Location Trends](#)

## **Job Growth:**

Texas is No. 1 over the last 10 years for non-farm seasonally adjusted job creation, [BLS](#)

## **Jobs Created by Hispanic Business Owners:**

Texas is No. 1, [SBO Census data](#)

## **Jobs Created by Women Business Owners:**

Texas is No. 1 for jobs created by African-American, Hispanic and veteran women business owners, [SBO Census data](#)

## **Oil and Gas Production:**

Texas is No. 1, [EIA](#)

## **Overall Cost of Doing Business:**

Texas is No. 1 for lowest overall costs, [Area Development](#)

## **Population Growth:**

Texas is No. 1 for population growth, 12th straight year, Census data: [2000-2010](#), [2010-2017](#)

## **Small-Business Friendliness:**

Texas is rated A+, [Thumbtack](#)

## **State of the Year:**

Texas is No. 1, [Business Facilities](#)

## **Top Magnet Schools:**

School for the Talented and Gifted, Dallas, is No. 1, Carnegie Vanguard High School, Houston is No. 2, School of Science and Engineering Magnet, Dallas, is No. 3, DeBakey High School for Health Professions, Houston, is No. 5, [U.S. News](#)

## **Top State for High Tech:**

Texas is No. 1, [Chief Executive](#)

## **Wind-Generation Capacity:**

Texas is No. 1, [EIA](#)



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